

## INCOMING TELEGRAM

*Department of State*

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### Action

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NO: 3101, DECEMBER 9, 7 PM

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PARIS FOR EMBASSY USRO USCINCEUR THURSTON AND WEST

BONN'S 1204 TO DEPARTMENT

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IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS TODAY WITH TWO FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS (BOTH DEPARTMENT HEAD LEVEL) BOTH STATED BELIEF GERMAN PAPER (REFTEL) OMITTS MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION ON WHICH ANSWERS TO ALL OTHERS DEPENDS, NAMELY, "WHAT DO WE DO ON MAY 27" (WHEN SIX MONTHS EXPIRES).

ONE OF FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIALS WENT ON TO ELABORATE HIS THINKING AS FOLLOWS: IF THIS FUNDAMENTAL DECISION IS NOT TAKEN NOW SITUATION LIKELY TO CONTINUE FOR REMAINDER OF SIX MONTHS IN WHICH BOTH SIDES SAYING THEY DO NOT WANT WAR AND WESTERN PUBLIC, AT LEAST, ASSUMING THAT THEREFORE THERE WILL NOT BE WAR. HE DOUBTED IF THIS WAS SOUND LOGIC. HE THOUGHT: IF FUNDAMENTAL DECISION IS NOT TAKEN IN ADEQUATE TIME SOVIETS SURE TO KNOW THIS FACT AND TO BE EMBOLDENED. THEREBY. MOREOVER AS TIME RUNS OUT EXISTING ENORMOUS PRESSURES NOT TO TAKE FUNDAMENTAL DECISION UNTIL LAST MINUTE

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WILL BE INCREASED AND LAST MINUTE DECISIONS AS THEY ARE TAKEN WILL CREATE HASTY REACTIONS FROM OTHER SIDE GREATLY ENHANCING DANGER OF CHAIN REACTION AND SLIDE INTO WAR WITHOUT EITHER SIDE HAVING EXPECTED OR INTENDED IT. HE DEFINED FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION AS TWO-FOLD (A) MILITARY - WHAT DO WE DO MAY 27 (OR POSSIBLY SOONER, DEPENDING ON SOVIET ACTIONS) AND (B) POLITICAL - WHAT ARE LIKELY CONSEQUENCES OF FAILING TO TAKE FUNDAMENTAL DECISIONS IN ADEQUATE TIME. HE THOUGHT IF DECISION IS NOT TAKEN TO GO TO WAR RATHER THAN ALLOW GER INTERFERENCE WITH ACCESS TO BERLIN (HE DID NOT GO INTO DISTINCTION IF ANY BETWEEN ISSUE OF ACCESS AND ISSUE OF "RECOGNITION") AND THAT DECISION MADE KNOWN TO SOVIETS, ALL WESTERN THINKING AND PREPARATIONS WILL BE ON ASSUMPTION WAR WILL NOT HAPPEN AND RISKS OF SITUATION LEADING STRAIGHT TO WAR OR WESTERN CLIMB DOWN WILL BE GREATLY INCREASED. AFTER FIRST SAYING HE DID NOT SEE HOW SOVIETS COULD CLIMB DOWN WITHOUT LOSS OF FACE, HE AGREED THEY COULD OSTENSIBLY TURN OVER RESPONSIBILITIES TO GDR AND THEN DO NOTHING ABOUT IT AND LEAVE ALL EXISTING PROCEDURES UNALTERED.

THE OTHER FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL AGREED ABOUT NATURE FUNDAMENTAL DECISION THAT MUST BE TAKEN BUT ADDED THAT IT INCLUDED DECISION ON WHAT TERMS ISSUE OF WAR SHOULD BE MET, E. G., HAVING EMBARKED ON NEGOTIATIONS OR NOT.

ONE FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL THOUGHT LLOYD AGREED THAT THIS FUNDAMENTAL DECISION MUST BE TAKEN FIRST. THE OTHER EXPRESSED GREAT PESSIMISM AND THOUGHT IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO GET HMG TO DECIDE IN DECEMBER WHAT IT WOULD DO IN MAY ON SO GREAT AND DIFFICULT AN ISSUE. HE SAW NO SIGN THAT ANY SERIOUS THINKING HAD TAKEN PLACE IN ANY WESTERN GOVERNMENT ON THIS ISSUE.

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